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LA BOHÈME

Opera in four acts

Music Giacomo Puccini

Libretto Giacosa and Illica

Conductor Roderick Brydon

Producer Jean-Claude Auvray

Designer Giorgio Cristini

Lighting Designer David Colmer

DGOS Opera Ireland Chorus Chorus Master Igor Kennaway

RTE Concert Orchestra by kind permission of the RTE Authority

29 November, 1, 3, 5, 7 December 1993

There will be two intervals

La Bohème was first performed at Teatro Regio, Turin, on 1st February 1896.

The first performance in Dublin was given by the Carl Rosa Company at the Gaiety Theatre in August 1897.





Giacomo Puccini

CAST

In order of appearance

Rodolfo, a poet Stuart Neill

Marcello, a painter Patryk Wroblewski

Colline, a philosopher Egils Silins

Schaunard, a musician Martin Higgins

Benoit, a landlord Peter McBrien

Mimi, a seamstress Regina Nathan

Parpignol, a toyseller Donal Byrne

Musetta, a grisette Majella Cullagh

Alcindoro Frank O'Brien

Customs House Sergeant Gerard O'Connor

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SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Paris. A garret in the Latin Quarter. Christmas Eve 1830, shortly after the Revolution

Marcello and Rodolfo, painter and poet respectively, try to work despite the freezing conditions. Marcello, working on a vast biblical canvas, remarks that the Red Sea looks very cold in these temperatures and Rodolfo agrees to sacrifice one of his unperformed versetragedies to the fire. Act by Act, the tragedy is torn out of the manuscript, briefly criticised and thrown on the fire. Colline enters with a bundle of books which he has been trying to pawn. Another of Rodolfo's manuscripts is stuffed into the stove. Warm at least now, the three friends are still hungry.

Schaunard, a musician, arrives bearing food, wine and fuel. The Bohemians build up the fire and pay little attention to Schaunard's attempts to describe how he made the money which has provided the feast by playing for an eccentric English aristocrat who demanded that Schaunard should play until his parrot died and how, wearying of the effort, Schaunard poisoned the man's parrot with parsley. The friends don't listen, grateful merely that there's food and wine and a little money left over.

Rodolfo locks the door and they begin to drink. Schaunard proposes that they should go to the Café Momus for supper. since it's Christmas Eve - but a knock at the door interrupts them. It is the landlord, Benoit. They invite him in to drink with them, stalling his demands for the long-overdue rent. Benoit relaxes and begins to tell them of his visits to carbarets where women are freely available. The Bohemians pretend to be outraged by news of a married man enjoying extra-marital affairs and throw him out of the garret for attempting to corrupt their morals. They divide the money on the table and set out for the Café Momus. leaving only Rodolfo who wants to finish an article he is writing.

As Rodolfo writes, another knock at the door is heard. He asks who it is and a woman's voice replies that her candle has gone out and she needs a light. He opens the door and sees a pale pretty young woman, holding in one hand a candle and in the other a key. She comes in and takes a light from his candle but is prevented from leaving by a terrible fit of coughing. She sits down to recover herself but her candle is again extinguished by the wind. Only moonshine reflecting on the snowy rooftops outside the window, lights the room. The young woman has dropped her key and together they search the floor for it. Rodolfo's hand brushes against hers and he takes hold of it. warming it ("Che gelida manina"). He tells her that he is a poet and that despite his poverty he is successful with women but that she has captivated him. The girl replies to his ardent romanticising by telling him that she is called Mimi and that she is a seamstress. Their conversation is interrupted by Marcello, Schaunard and Colline passing below. Is he coming or isn't he? Rodolfo turns and seeing her in the moonlight, pours out his heart to her, enraptured by her simplicity, her beauty, her frailness. He wants to stay with her there, but she urges him out into the night and the life of the bustling streets and cafés. Their voices are heard drifting into the night and into the street as the curtain falls.

ACT II

A few minutes later outside the Café Momus.

The streets are thronged with tradesmen, shopkeepers, children and citizens. Mimi and Rodolfo thread their way through the crowds to a hat seller. Mimi emerges a few minutes later in a brand new hat. She looks about her and Rodolfo curtly asks her what she is looking at but she replies gaily that a man in love is always jealous. They meet up with Marcello, Schaunard and Colline, and Mimi is introduced as his new-found Muse.

A toy-seller enters. Parpignol is followed by children crying out for Christmas toys and by their mothers trying to take them home again. The Bohemians enjoy themselves with food and wine but are distracted when a crowd forms excitedly around a new-comer.

Musetta, Marcello's former model and mistress, arrives with a rich but foolish protector, Alcindoro. Musetta and her new love sit ostentatiously close to Marcello. She sings a seductive waltz, secretly signalling to Marcello that she still wants him. By reply, Marcello joins in the refrain and Alcindoro is got rid of by Musetta who, suddenly deciding that her new shoes pinch, sends him to the bootmaker's for a more comfortable pair.

Soldiers enter, part of the victory parade to celebrate Louis Phillippe's accession. The waiter brings the bill and Schaunard finds that all his money has gone. Musetta rises to the occasion "The gentleman will pay" she says, meaning Alcindoro, and the six friends disappear in the wake of the parade.

ACT III

The Barrière d'Enfers, Paris, February 1831

Shortly before dawn – and the only sign of life comes from a cheap tavern, the Port of Marseilles, from which are heard laughter and singing. As dawn approaches, the street is slowly filled with travellers and salespeople waiting to go into the city. Their baskets are inspected by a cautious police. Life is still dangerous in the city.

Mimi arrives, pale and distressed. Her cough is seldom quiet now, racking her from head to foot. She sends into the cafe for Marcello who comes out to meet her. He explains that he has forsaken the visionary world of the great painter for the more lucrative work of a signpainter. Noticing her shivers he asks Mimi to come inside but she asks if Rodolfo is there. She begins to cry and tells Marcello that Rodolfo's persistent jealousy is destroying her and that her only chance of survival lies in their separating.

Rodolfo has woken from his stupor and comes in search of Marcello. Mimi hides. He rails against Mimi, calling her heartless and a coquette. His self-satisfied outrage is broken by Mimi's coughing. He turns again to see her – pale, ill, her heart breaking. The two lovers talk for a while and decide that the best thing they can do is to part – but amicably they will remain friends.

Marcello returns with Musetta who has been caught with another man. A furious row develops between these two and Rodolfo and Mimi realise that their love is inescapable. They will stay together until the spring comes, wishing only that the winter could last forever.

INTERVAL

ACT IV

An attic in the Latin Quarter, April 1831

Rodolfo and Marcello are alone again. Mimi has gone off with a wealthy lover, following Musetta's example. Schaunard enters with Colline to dispel their gloom with games and laughter, as in the first act.

The fun is becoming riotous when the door opens and Musetta arrives. Mimi has been forsaken by her wealthy lover and hounded by creditors. Now dying, she has asked Musetta to bring her back to her former lover, Rodolfo runs out to get her and brings her back, almost carrying her as she comes into the room, obviously at the point of death. Gently he lays her down.

As he warms Mimi's hands, Rodolfo

looks at his friends.

Musetta takes off her diamond earrings and gives them to Marcello, telling him to sell them and buy food and fetch a doctor and then goes out with him. Colline now makes up his mind to pawn his overcoat and addresses it in mock heroic terms "Vecchia zimarra senti". Schaunard then goes out leaving Rodolfo and Mimi alone. Mimi, who had seemingly been asleep now speaks to Rodolfo, who has all the time been by her bedside "Sono andati". They talk of the past, and the music recalls their first meeting. Musetta and Marcello come back, she with a muff, he with medicine. They busy themselves with the medicine. and Mimi eagerly warms her hands with the muff, while Musetta prays for her friend. Quietly Mimi dies. Rodolfo flings himself on the bed sobbing, while the others stand around, grief stricken, as the curtain falls.

Set design for La Bohème by Giorgio Christini



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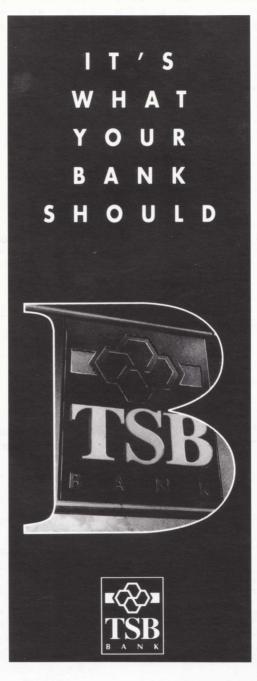
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PUCCINI AND LA BOHÉME

Giacomo Puccini had lived something of la vie de Bohème in his student days in Milan, but the Paris of his opera La Bohème is imaginary: he had not yet visited the French capital. True, he was no longer a penniless, happy-go-lucky student about whom his teacher. Amilcare Ponchielli could write to Signora Puccini, "I should be extremely satisfied if (your son) applied himself to his work with a little more assiduity, for if he wants to he can do it very well". This was already a man of thirty-eight who, after a modest reception for the short Le Villi and a flop with a fulllength Edgar, had suddenly hit the big time in 1893 with Manon Lescaut. But success made him cautious as well as confident. He fussed over subjects that Ricordi proposed for a new opera and decided to rely on his own experience and set to music a libretto based on Henri Mürger's rambling Scènes de la Vie de Bohème, a play (1849) and novel (1851) that had begun as newspaper instalments. Puccini had considered this



Henry Mürger

subject before, but only now did he warm to its possibilities. Discussing his project at a cafe in the Galleria in Milan with Ruggiero Leoncavallo, composer of *Pagliacci*, who had helped write the libretto of *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini suddenly discovered he had a rival.

Leoncavallo immediately accused Puccini of having stolen the idea from him, revealing at the same time that as Puccini had spurned his original offer of a libretto he had set it to music himself. A first-class row ensued and Leoncavallo. publicly staking his artistic claim in the manner of the time, announced that he had finished his opera called La Vita di Bohème. Puccini followed with an announcement in the same day's evening paper that he was just finishing his opera on the subject, which would be known as La Bohème. The rift that followed between the two composers, who had never been on the most cordial of terms. was further widened when Leoncavallo's opera (now also called simply La Bohème) was eventually performed for the first time in Venice in May 1897 on the same night as Puccini's opera, already a success more than a year old, was packing another theatre in the same city.

Massenet had considered making an opera of *La Bohème*, and one wonders if the Frenchman's setting would have surpassed Leoncavallo's to challenge Puccini's lead. In the latter's hands, the work paints a picture-postcard view of Paris – a Bohemia that never existed anywhere except in artists' dreams which, as Puccini reminds us, are always going up in smoke. In the eyes of many, including the critic who found *La Bohème* "foul in subject, fulminant but futile in its music" there was something



Giacomo Puccini (left) with Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

scurrilous about showing people "living together" onstage, and to make matters worse Puccini had glorified a mere seamstress as his heroine. The real central figure – Musetta, who embodies the Bohemian spirit – is relegated to second spot while Mimi's frail health and doomed love preempt the composer's whole-hearted sympathy.

The inspiration of the gaiety which emphasizes the tragedy of *La Bohème* was something Puccini drew from his own youth, from experiences which led him to keep what he called a diary of "Bohemian Life" where Bohemian youth is echoed in all the poverty and hand-to-mouth fun and high spirits of the opera's setting, and in the uniquely youthful quality of the music; all that his own

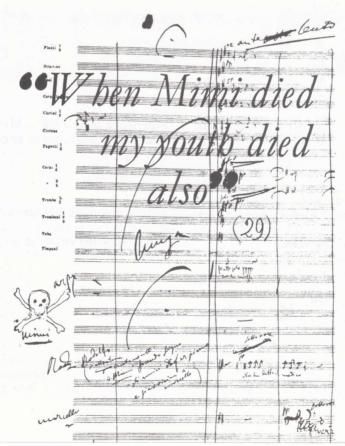
experience lacked was a Mimi. But as Verdi said of Shakespeare, to copy reality was good, to invent it was even better. And that is surely what Puccini did with the heroine of *La Bohème*.

The audience at the premiere in Turin in 1896 may have had no inkling it was in attendance at the birth of a masterpiece, but it did enjoy La Bohème, more than the critics did, and extra performances had to be scheduled. Arturo Toscanini, who conducted, was already the most famous up-and-coming conductor in Italy. Noting the delicate, atmospheric sentiment of La Bohème, Toscanini took a page from Wagner's book in Bayreuth and ordered the house lights out during the performance - the first time this had been done in Italy.

La Bohème had little success when first heard in Dublin, produced by The Carl Rosa Company only a year after the Italian premiere. The Company had played it in Manchester the previous April with Robert Cunningham, William Paul, Charles Tilbury, Martha Winckworth, Alice Esty and Bessie McDonald in the cast. In the Gaiety production only Tilbury and McDonald remained. The Rodolfo and Marcello were Italians, Umberto Salvi and Giuseppe Maggi, Cecily Lorraine was Mimi and William Dever the Colline, Claude Jacquinot conducted. The opera

puzzled both critics and public. The "frail creatures" Mimi and Musetta were considered objectionable. "The music lacked character and melody, there was not a single encore" – that seemed to be the final proof of merit and success then. "No matter lingered in the memory except such music that was reminiscent of Mascagni and Leoncavallo." "The audience," it was said, "met the opera with silent disapproval and it was clear it would not last." One critic urged "that the Management would abandon the performance which was arranged for the following Saturday Matinee."

A skull-and-crossbones marks the manuscript score at the death of Mimi



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COLD HANDS, WARM HEART?

"O bella età d'imganni e d'Utopie! Si crede, spera – tutto bello appare"

("O sweet age of deceit and Utopias! You believe and hope – and everything seems beautiful".)

MARCELLO Act 11 La Bohème

La Bohème is a musical gem. The climax of the opera, Mimi's death and Rodolfo's tardy realisation that she is gone, makes it always a moving experience. It is unquestionably the pinnacle of sweet melodrama. Today's audience, however, while still moved and delighted by the opera, takes nothing for granted: we want to know about the work as drama: who are these Bohemians? What sort of people are they? What is Puccini's interest in them? What is he telling us about them? What is he communicating through them?

A closer look at the text answers some of these questions but some of them are not definitively answered within the opera; different productions can legitimately explore and bring out different possible answers and ultimately part of the fascination of the work lies in the fact that some of the questions just remain with us to be tested against future viewings and hearings of the opera.

The key question is why Mimi ever has to part from Rodolfo after the meeting in Act One; why she is ever left alone so that she shares only a few minutes with him again before her death. In order to attempt an adequate answer to this question and in doing so gain an understanding of the work, we must look in some detail at what the libretto shows of the characters of the protagonists.

For many, La Bohème is a familiar opera and no reminder is necessary of the plot in general or the qualities which

make it such an enduring and endearing work. But it is worth mentioning some of the features which elevate this opera to the first rank of Puccini's output and indeed of all nineteenth-century creations for the stage.

In La Bohème there is an unfailing supply of 'song', a melodic inventiveness and sense of vocal appositeness that we find nowhere else in Puccini. The orchestra is almost miraculously perfect: Puccini's command of the orchestra is total and sui generis. Pseudo-Wagnerian traces recognisable in his previous score, Manon Lescaut are gone: the wonderfully expressive harmonies are all Puccini's own; the way he unites orchestra and voice show how well he has learned the lessons of Verdi's greatest triumphs in this area of voice-instrument interdependence. In the lovers' great arias, the voice itself seems unrestricted from start to finish, the soaring melodies begin and finish on single notes as if they were mere liberated recitatives and this in part establishes the tone of gentle tenderness which suffuses these arias, filling every pause in the melody with a sweet-sadness so that we hear each break in the music as a sob caught in the throat of the orchestra.

The pervasive sweet-sadness of the opera is that of the loves of youth seen in nostalgic retrospect. It is crucial for us to discern that it is the sweet-sadness of nostalgia that permeates the opera: the work is totally through-composed and even the sparkle and bustle of Act Two is mediated through a nostalgic vision. But nostalgic for what? Isn't this a tale of illness and death? Yes, but while illness and death move us in this opera, they are too beautiful to be the ingredients of a tragedy. We see – even may feel – tears

but no one is torn apart by agony nor do we ourselves feel lacerated by the experience and while death is in the air from Act One on, we see no prolonged suffering, no lingering pain. Similarly there is poverty but no squalor. Above all there is the sight of youthful creativity always ready to be overlaid by vigorous jollity. This is the high-point of late Italian Romanticism - it is not an essay in verismo. Everything in the opera is presented in the light of the twin beacons of Youth and Love. The plaintive melancholy that imbues this vision is Puccini's own, for he felt himself to have missed out on both Youth and Love.

The soft-focus of the opera may seem to some to be decadent yet the opera's construction is extremely rigorous, both musically and dramatically. The two outer acts take place in the Bohemians' garret, the two inner acts outside and all four are unified by the intense sense of physical cold which pervades them. The presentation of character and action is simple and direct and a single tone of nostalgia and sadness overarches the whole work, despite its bursts of gaiety.

The tone of sadness and nostalgia exists not merely at the narrative level (the story of the sick working girl bound from the start to die unfulfilled); much more is it perceptible at the melodic level as a plaintive longing for a fleeting and exuberant youth, a note which though sweet, is of a melancholic awareness that the present can never be held on to and of a longing for a free and untrammeled youth of the kind that Puccini never allowed himself. He regretted deeply that he had never had time to enjoy being young despite his establishment success. But La Bohème

expresses perfectly the vision of an impossible artistic youth that Puccini imagines he would like to be able to look back on.

La Bohème embodies a dream of an ideal youth that seemingly captivates its audiences worldwide. But why? This world of youth that no one has ever known is one where carefree male artists forge their careers amid horseplay and love affairs, while their women love them and die angelic deaths or fight with them and go on to richer but less worthy men. What is it that attracted Puccini to this world and still seems to attract us?

No one is a hero in this unheroic opera, but Rodolfo comes closest as the male centre of interest. He, poet though he is and capable of tenderness and sensitivity, still displays characteristics common to the most macho of men - "I tell you (Mimi) I would never forgive an offence against me", and the chauvinism here (Act 11) is no isolated instance. In the first exchange of the opera, where Marcello and Rodolfo discuss the cold, Marcello quite gratuitously calls Musetta's heart "the great ice box". Love is termed a stove that burns too much too fast, where man goes up in flames and woman stands and watches.

Is this just fun — mere banter and youthful raillery? Is Marcello bitter solely because he has been spurned by his girlfriend? Is Rodolfo merely backing up his pal to make him feel better? Or is this the first of many clues that the 'Bohemians' are fundamentally misogynistic young men who feel endlessly sorry for themselves? In the same act, Schaunard boasts that he got his fee from the eccentric Milord by using his charm to fascinate a serving girl. The same man represents the lure of the streets to the

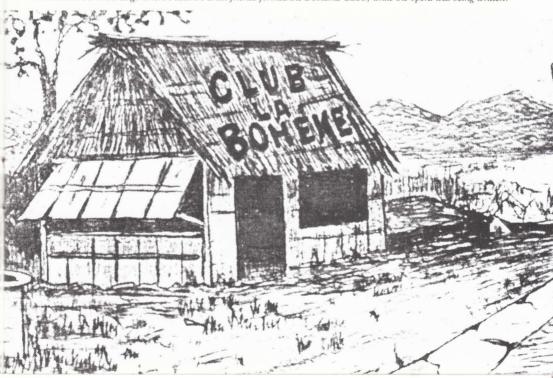
THE RULES OF THE CLUB LA BOHÈME

These were posted on the walls of an inn where Puccini lived in Torre del Lago and where he spent much time drinking and playing cards with friends and neighbours, while working on La Bohème.

- No. 1 The members of the Club La Bohème, faithful interpreters of the spirit in which it was founded, pledge themselves under oath to be well and eat better.
- No. 2 Poker faces, pedants, weak stomachs, blockheads, puritans and other wretches of the species are not admitted and will be chased away.

- No. 3 The President acts as conciliator but undertakes to hinder the Treasurer in the collection of the subscription money.
- No. 4 The Treasurer is empowered to abscond with the money.
- No. 5 The lighting of the *locale* is provided by a petrol lamp. Failing the fuel, the "moccoli" of the members are to be used. (This is a pun on Moccola which may mean 'candle stump' or 'blockhead'.)
- No. 6 All games permitted by law are forbidden.
- No. 7 Silence is prohibited.
- No. 8 Wisdom is not permitted, except in special cases.

The hut at Torre del Lago where Puccini's artist friends formed the BOHEME CLUB, while the opera was being written.



others as available food and girls. The young artists of Act One sound like young rakes, glorying in their sexual prowess. Their 'game' with the landlord Benoit turns on their being "boys together". Even in the midst of the lovers' rapturous foreplay, when the bucks realise that Rodolfo has found a "sweet girl", Marcello remarks that he 'has found his poetry'. This tole for women as the muse and inspirer of creative men is reiterated in the opera. Musetta's very name declares that she is a 'little Muse'.

In Act Two, the male gaze is revealed as joking but quite ruthless. The men see Musetta's attempts to regain Marcello's affections as a "comedy". Mimi, understanding her position, feels sorry for her. Rodolfo blames Musetta while Mimi carries on proclaiming her love for him and Rodolfo's last word on love here is that if it does not revenge itself it is weak. Unlike Mimi Rodolfo is shown to be hard and self-regarding.

At the beginning of Act Four, while secretly 'dving of love' (though too proud to approach or show concern for their lovers) Rodolfo and Marcello pour all of their energies into putting up a front of indifference for each other, to keep the male faith of 'not caring'. True, later in the Act, all the men show concern and tenderness towards the dying Mimi (though less practically and to a lesser extent than Musetta); in the engulfing emotion of her angelic death their barriers - and ours - go down; but until then a contradictory picture of the young male artists has been drawn that shows precisely their maleness to be a factor that makes this 'Bohemia' and not 'Utopia'.

Is it merely the beautiful music that

has beguiled us into being enchanted by this 'boys' own' world? For it is a boy's world, it is impossible to take the artistic endeavours of these young men seriously. Marcello is flippant about his painting in Act 1 – even modifies it to an inn-sign in Act Three. Rodolfo, in burning his play in Act One, makes no heart-rending sacrifice but a joke of his creative efforts. All this is a far cry from Puccini's agonising over his own work. He took it very seriously - and vet he creates 'artists' who don't. He cannot have failed to realise how unrelated to reality were the characters he was creating in this 'Bohemia'.

Mimi is no tragic heroine yet she is never shown personally in an unrealistic or ambiguous mode. Her idealisation is purely aesthetic; her illness and death are rendered palatable while she herself remains a figure plausible in a real and not simply 'Bohemian' world. Unlike Tosca she does not choose death heroically: unlike Butterfly she does not achieve honour through suicide. Mimi simply dies - almost unnoticed and buoyed up with illusory hope. But in life, Mimi defeats that view of women propounded by the boys. She has worked and kept herself cheerful before meeting Rodolfo. She has longed for her pink bonnet but she is not portrayed as wheedling it out of Rodolfo. While the others squander their money at Café Momus on expensive delicacies she orders only a custard. That she later spends time with 'the Viscount' is purely a matter of survival when she is no longer up to selling her labour. And in the third Act it is Mimi, and not Rodolfo, who suggests that for his peaceof-mind, they should part 'without bitterness'.

When Mimi returns in Act Four we see the magnitude of her love for Rodolfo – as she experiences it. Why could not Rodolfo accept her and love her and have kept her with him? He has his reasons for wanting her to leave him and what we make of them is the key to how we will read this opera. Mimi believes him to be too jealous to bear her living with him - like Browning's Duke he seems to want all smiles to cease for others - but Rodolfo confesses to Marcello the real reason. He is assailed by remorse because he feels that he is the cause of Mimi's fatal illness. There is no fire, the wind sweeps through the garret and it is so cold. While Mimi laughs and sings he feels that keeping her there will bring about her death. Mimi, he says, is a hothouse plant and love is not enough to bring her back to life.

What do we make of all this? Altruism? Selfishness? Is this genuine caring for a beloved? Is it a way of saying that he suffers too much in seeing her suffer? Is it just that their happy idyll has become blemished? It is an uncomfortable truth about the men in this opera that they are simply not humane enough - merely too selfish - to let their relationships work. Not much of a Utopia, we might reflect. The opera does not give an unequivocal answer to our questions. We must decide for ourselves in the light that all the librettists and composer show about Rodolfo. And what we decide about Rodolfo will finally colour our understanding of this great romantic masterpiece.

PETER CALDWELL

Set design for La Bohème by Giorgio Christini



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Mircea Petcu (Deputy
Leader)
Fionnuala Sherry
Pamela Forde
Sunniva Fitzpatrick
Eileen Murphy
Tim Kirwan

2nd VIOLINS

Sheila O'Grady

Elizabeth MacNally Paul O'Hanlon Roisin Cavanagh Mairead Nesbitt Arthur McIver Donal Roche

VIOLAS

Padraig O'Connor Ruth Mann Tommy Kane Michelle Lalor

CELLOS

David James Annette Cleary Catherine Behan Hilary O'Donovan

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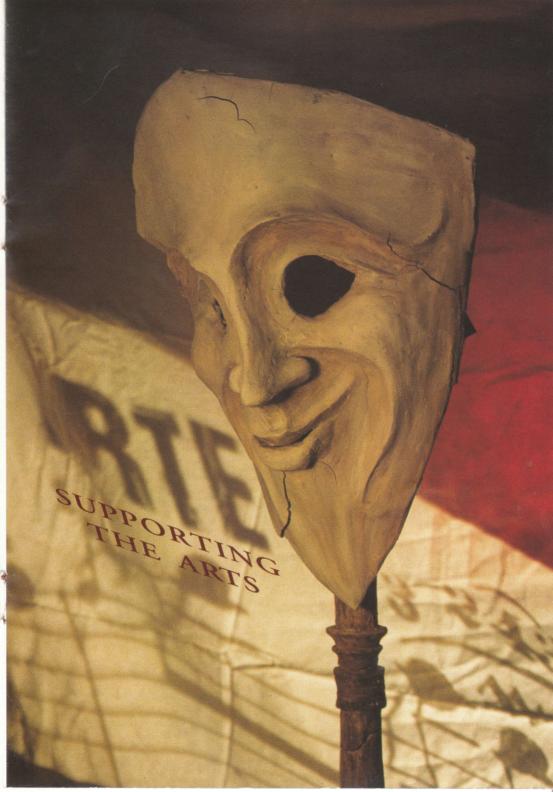
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ELAINE PADMORE - Artistic Director

Is in her fifth season as Artistic Director of DGOS Opera Ireland, following two seasons as guest director in 1989-90. Has been Artistic Director of Wexford Festival Opera since 1982. She studied music at Birmingham University and then held a scholarship at the Guildhall School. She freelanced as a singer, repetiteur, writer and lecturer. After a period as editor at the Oxford University Press she wrote a book on Wagner, became lecturer in opera at the Royal Academy of Music, and began to give broadcast talks. She joined the BBC as a music programmes producer and until 1982 held the post of Head of Opera, in charge of the planning and production of opera broadcasts. Well-known as a "golden voice" of Radio 3 until 1991, she became Artistic Director for Classical Productions London (touring arena productions of Tosca and Carmen originating at Earls Court), was Artistic Consultant for the 1992 London Opera Festival and has recently been appointed Director of the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, where she



DAVID COLLOPY - Administrator

David is the most experienced opera administrator in Ireland. An accountant by profession, he joined Wexford Festival Opera in 1980. During his time there, he played a large part in developing the Festival into an operatic event which now enjoys wide international acclaim. Following a period spent working in a London-based design consultancy, he joined the then D.G.O.S. in 1985 as their first professional administrator and has been instrumental in transforming the organisation into a highly professional unit. His commitment to increase the level of private sector funding for the company is reflected in the growth of commercial sponsorship in recent times, funds which assist greatly in fulfilling his ambition to broaden the artform by bringing opera to the greatest number of people.



IGOR KENNAWAY - Chorus Master

From 1976 to 1984, Igor Kennaway held conducting appointments at the opera houses of Osnabruck, Mannheim and Mainz and appeared as Guest Conductor at the Koblenz and Darmstadt opera houses. Between1984 and 1986 he was Sir Georg Solti's Musical Assistant. In 1987 he became Assistant Chorus Master at Bayreuth and in 1990 was appointed Daniel Barenboim's Assistant for the Bayreuth 'Ring'. In 1989, he became Guest Conductor at the Stuttgart State Opera. Between 1989 and 1991 he appeared frequently at the Opera de Nice. He has conducted the London Mozart Players, the City of London Sinfonia, I Virtuosi di Santa Cecilia, the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, the Dessau State Orchestra and has recently recorded with the Ulster and BBC Symphony Orchestras. His CD's of Vaughan Williams The Pilgrim's Progress appeared in 1993. In 1994, he becomes guest conductor of the South West German Radio Orchestra.



RODERICK BRYDON - Conductor

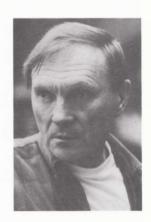
Roderick Brydon was born in Edinburgh. During the early years of his operatic career, he was closely associated with Sadler's Wells Opera and with Scottish Opera. He has more recently been Music Director of the Lucerne Opera House, and the Bern Opera, where he conducted A Village Romeo and Juliet, Capriccio and Peter Grimes. He made his Covent Garden debut with Britten's A Midsummer Night's Dream and at Opera North in a highly acclaimed Francois Rochaix production of La Traviata, followed by The Rake's Progress. He has conducted all over Europe with a wide repertoire ranging from Monteverdi to Hans Werner Henze, and recently has formed a firm relationship with the Opera of Los Angeles, as well as Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Auckland.

Plans include a return to Geneva for Billy Budd (co-production with Los Angeles) and to Sydney for Carmen and Brisbane for Tosca.



IEAN-CLAUDE AUVRAY - Director

Jean-Claude Auvray was resident producer at the Paris Opera from 1973 to 1977. Since then his own productions have included Tosca and Cosi fan tutte at the Paris Opera; Les Contes d'Hoffmann, Romeo and Juliette, Trittico and a Mozart cycle in Basel; Manon in Toulouse, Nice and Houston; La Traviata in Toulouse, Montpellier, Nancy and Nantes; Tancredi at the Aix-en-Provence Festival and in Venice, Don Carlos, Boris and Elektra at the Orange Festival; La Gioconda in Verona; Il Ritorno d'Ulisse and Pelleas in Lausanne; Rigoletto in Basel and Frankfurt; Don Giovanni in Karlsruhe; Faust in Nancy, Nantes and Nice; Fidelio, a Mozart cycle and Forza del Destino in Montpellier; Le Roi d'Ys, La Dame Blanche and Der Vampyr at the Wexford Festival; Die Entführung aus dem Serail in Lausanne, Avignon and Nantes and Toulouse later this season; Carmen, Boheme and Butterfly in Luzern. Engagements in 1994 include Butterfly in Avignon, Attila and Due Foscari in Nice, Entführung in Copenhagen, Ballo in Maschera in several opera houses in France. In '96 Manon Lescaut in Geneva and Der Vampyr in Montpellier.



PAUL BAILLIE - Assistant Director

Born in London and trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He directed the Operatic Scenes at Wexford for the last two Festivals and was previously assistant there to John Lloyd Davies for The Taming of the Shrew. His own productions include Curlew River Music Theatre Ulster, Die Fledermaus DGOS Opera Ireland, Gianni Schicchi Birmingham Conservatorie and Don Giovanni Opera Box. As an assistant director in Dublin he has worked previously with Francesca Zambello Lucia and Dieter Kaegi Cosi fan tutte, and Martha. He has also been Staff Director for Opera Box and the new D'Oyly Carte Opera.



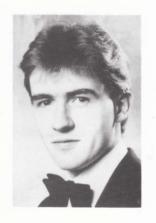
DAVID COLMER - Lighting Designer

Has worked extensively with the Oxford Playhouse Company for whom he has lit over twenty-five major productions including Happy End, Playboy of the West Indies, King Lear, Peer Gynt, Mephisto, The Crucible, Twelfth Night, The Oedipus Plays and The Duchess of Malfi. West End productions include Confusions, Alice's Boys and West. David has also designed lighting for the Tricycle Theatre including Burning Point, Trinidad Sisters, Great White Hope, Pentecost, The Hostage, A Free Country and Once a Catholic. Other companies include Cambridge Theatre Company, Theatre Royal York, Stephen Berkoff and Michael Codron. Musical productions include Orlando, Cosi fan tutte, Marriage of Figaro for Opera 80, also Die Fledermaus, Carmen, Threepenny Opera and Billie Holliday's All or Nothing at All. The most unusual job undertaken was lighting a song and dance festival in a Roman Amphitheatre on the shores of the Mediterranean at Leptis Magna in Libya. This is his fourth season as lighting designer for DGOS Opera Ireland, following his first for Wexford Festival Opera.



ALEX COLLINSON—Repetiteur

Was born in Somerset. Studied at the Royal College of Music and was awarded numerous prizes. In 1989 he was offered a place as Repetiteur at the National Opera Studio, under sponsorship from the Friends of Covent Garden and the Radcliffe Trust and was pianist /M.D. for Scottish Opera-Go-Round's production of Eugene Onegin the following year. Concerts include the Portsmouth Festival, Southwark Cathedral, Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, Netherlands, Radio London Warwick Arts Trust and Radio Scotland. He has participated in Masterclasses with Paul Hamburger, York Summer School, the Britten-Pears School, Thomas Allen and Katja Ricciarelli and the Kathleen Ferrier, Maggie Teyte and Britten-Pears competitions. He has acted as Repetiteur for many companies in and around London, including Court Opera, Regency Opera, Opera Box, Baylis Programme E.N.O. and Opera Factory. He has played at the last three Wexford Festivals and this year has also worked with DGOS Opera Ireland, European Chamber Opera, English National Opera and the West End productions of Miss Saigon, Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Sunset Boulevard



MAJELLA CULLAGH - Soprano

Majella Cullagh is a pupil of Mrs. Maeve Coughlan, Cork School of Music. She has recently completed her studies at the prestigious National Opera Studio in London. She began her studies in 1985, and made her theatre debut in 1987 in Gian-Carlo Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors. Many other leading roles followed including Gilbert and Sullivan and light opera. She has played Despina in Young Dublin Opera's Cosi fan tutte, Barbarina in DGOS Opera Ireland's The Marriage of Figaro and Une Femme Grecque in Gluck's Iphigenie en Tauride with the English Bach Festival at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Majella has performed extensively on the concert platform throughout Ireland and England, most recently at St. Paul's Church Covent Garden. Other recent performances include the National Opera Studio's Operatic scenes at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank Centre, the role of Musetta for RTE's Proms, and Lauretta Gianni Schicchi, and Serafina Il Campanello for Neath Opera Wales. She appeared in the Operatic scenes at 1993 Wexford Festival and will repeat Musetta for English Touring Opera in spring 1994.



BIOGRAPHIES

MARTIN HIGGINS - Baritone

Was born in Dublin 1968. He studied singing with Veronica Dunne at the College of Music, Dublin and while there was a member of the RTE Chamber Choir. He has also studied in Siena (Italy) with Carlo Bergonzi under an Italian Government Scholarship. In 1991 he gained a place at the National Opera Studio (London) receiving awards from the Friends of Covent Garden and winning the British Alcan award in association with Welsh National Opera. Martin's roles to date have included Augure (Rossi's Orfeo), Malatesa Don Pasquale, Don Alfonso Cosi fan tutte, Sid Albert Herring and Publio La Clemenza di Tito. Since leaving the Opera Studio he has performed Guglielmo Cosi fan tutte for Scottish Opera and Schaunard La Boheme for Welsh National Opera. He has also gained wide experience in operetta and musicals including Finnian's Rainbow, Gondoliers (Guiseppe) and Showboat (Ravenal). He has performed throughout Ireland and the UK in the fields of concert-recital, oratorio and contemporary works.



PETER McBRIEN-Baritone

One of our most versatile singers with a very wide repertoire in oratorio, opera and concerts. Operatic roles in which he has distinguished himself include: Falstaff, Germont Père, Don Giovanni, Sharpless, Ping, Faninal, Rigoletto, Figaro, Dandini, Marcello etc. In Ireland he has sung with Irish National Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Opera Northern Ireland, Cork City Opera and the DGOS. His career has brought him to Britain, Holland, Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium and Italy and he has toured from coast to coast across the USA.



REGINA NATHAN - Soprano

Regina Nathan studied with Nancy Calthorpe at the College of Music Dublin; with Elizabeth Hawes at the Trinity College of Music, London and later at the National Opera Studio. Over the last two years she has won joint Third Prize at the 1991 International Belvedere Competition in Vienna, Third Prize at the 1991 Geneva competition and Fourth Prize at the 1992 Queen Elizabeth International Music Competition held in Brussels. In December 1991 she shared a special concert with Placido Domingo in Dublin and was voted 'Outstanding New Entertainer' by the National Entertainment Awards. RTE subsequently made a documentary of her work. Last Autumn Regina Nathan made her debut with Glyndebourne Touring Opera us Susanna in their production of *The Marriage of Figaro* which opened at Sadler's Wells. This year she has sung Mimi at the Luzern Stadttheater as well as with DGOS Opera Ireland and Euridice Orfeo at the Luzern Stadttheater. In 1994 she again takes the role of Susanna for Scottish Opera in a new production directed by David Leveaux, Nicholas McGegan conductor.



FRANK O'BRIEN - Baritone

Dubliner Frank O'Brien is familiar to audiences of opera and oratorio as well as those of recitals and the concert stage. He has been a guest artist with the DGOS performing both smaller roles such as the Sacristan in Tosca, Marullo in Rigoletto and Monterone in Rigoletto and his larger roles with this company include The Father in Hansel and Gretel, Figaro in The Barber of Seville, Guglielmo in Cosi fan tutte, Rodrigo in Don Carlos, and Sharpless in Madama Butterfly. With the Irish National Opera he toured as Masetto in Don Giovanni, Figaro in The Barber of Seville and Ford in Falstaff. He sang with Cork City Opera as Monterone in Rigoletto and Silvio in I Pagliacci. He has also sung in concert performances of La Boheme, La Troviata and Tosca at the National Concert Hall with Irish Concert Artists. Frank is equally at home on the musical stage and recently sang Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof with the Dungarvan Musical Society. He also sang in the RTE Proms in Rigoletto and La Boheme in 1991 and 1992. A highlight was singing solo in the Gay Byrne "Messiah for Somalia" at the Point Depot in 1992.



STUART NEILL - Tenor

Twenty-eight year old American tenor Stuart Neill makes his European Operatic debut in the role of Rodolfo. He made his triumphant debut as Arturo in the new production of I Puritani in Santiago's Teatro Municipal last August and returns there for the next three seasons. Last May he made his debut in Paris performing the Verdi Requiem with the Orchestre Colonne. He is a 1993 winner of a grant by the Richard Tucker Music Foundation for the most promising tenor and the 1992 Luciano Pavarotti International Competition. March 1993 witnessed his Fernando in Philadelphia's La Favorita. After the Santiago Puritanis, Baltimore received his first Edgardo in Lucia. Early 1994 takes Stuart to Chicago for his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Alfredo in their new Traviata with June Anderson. Spring 1994 features his debut with the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Gualtiero in Il Pirata followed by his return to Santiago as Rodolfo. In 1994-95 he makes his debut in Venice in Lucia and in Geneva as Arturo in I Puritani, which he also performs in his Concertgebouw debut in Amsterdam and at La Fenice. 1994-5 also sees his first Duke in Baltimore's Rigoletto.



EGILS SILINS - Bass

Born in Riga, Latvia . From 1983 - 1988, he studied singing at the Academy in Riga. Between 1988 and 1990, he worked with the National Latvia Opera, where he made his debut in the title role of Mefistofele Boito. Other roles include Pimen Boris Godunov and Escamillo Carmen. Since 1990, he has been a soloist with the Frankfurt Opera interpreting many roles, including Colline, Banquo Macbeth, Publio La Clemenza di Tito, Basilio II Barbiere di Sevilla, Zuniga and Escamillo. Egils is a prize winner at several prestigious competitions in Paris, Barcelona, Bilbao, Hamburg, the Belvedere Competition in Vienna, and Toulouse. He has given recitals in London, Riga, Toronto, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, etc. He has also sung as a guest in the Opera Houses of Geneva, Amsterdam, the Bregenz Opera Festival, Stuttgart Opera and most recently in Kaiserslauten where he sang the role of Graf de Silva in Verdi's Ernani. From January he becomes a member of the soloist ensemble in the opera company of Basel, Switzerland.



PATRYK WROBLEWSKI - Baritone

In 1984 he was awarded the Grand Prize at the Rose Ponselle International Competition; the following year he was a winner of the Luciano Pavarotti International Competition. During recent seasons he has sung Fernando in Rossini's La Gazza Ladra in Philadelphia, while in Dallas he was Silvio in Pagliacci, Ping Turandot, Il Poeta Il Turco in Italia, Valentin Faust and Orfeo in Monteverdi's Orfeo. At the Lyric Opera of Chicago, his roles include Germont La Traviata, Mr. Kallenbach Satyagraha and Marcello La Boheme. He made his debut as Don Giovanni at the Opera Grand Rapids. During the 1991/92 season he made his New York City Opera debut as Zurga in Les Pecheurs de Perles and as Silvio in Pagliacci. With the Greater Miami Opera he sang Lescaut Manon Lescaut and in November 1991 made his European stage debut as Silvio at the State Opera, Munich, repeated in June 1992. He sang Zurga in a new production of Les Pecheurs de Perles with Opera Forum of the Netherlands which was filmed. He made his debut with DGOS Opera Ireland last winter as Taddeo in L'Italiana in Algeri.





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